DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 290 236 EA 019 898

TITLE	Role of the Department Chairperson. The Best of ERIC on Educational Management, Number 92.
INSTITUTION	ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, Eugene, Oreg.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	Feb 88
CONTRACT	400-86-0003
NOTE	5p.; Sections printed on a colored background will not reproduce clearly.
AVAILABLE FROM	Publication Sales, ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, University of Oregon, 1787 Agate Street, Eugene, OR 97403 (free).
PUB TYPE	Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131) -- Information Analyses - ERIC Information Analysis Products (071)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Role; *Cooperation; Curriculum Development; *Department Heads; *Instructional Leadership; Principals; *Role Conflict; Secondary Education; Supervisors; Teamwork

ABSTRACT

All the 11 publications in this annotated bibiliography explore the department head's dual role as teacher and instructional leader. Three articles characterize principals' role as managerial and recommend that primary instructional and curriculur responsibilities be delegated to department heads with clearly designated positions in the school's administrative hierarchy. According to the third article, a team approach involving four key stages (diagnosis, allocation, implementation, and evaluation) works best in secondary schools. At least three publications address the role conflict and ambiguity experienced by heads as line or staff supervisors, change agents, or helping professionals susceptible to burnout. The eighth publication discusses one chairperson's facilitative approach to peer review in an English department. The ninth article describes a leadership training program to help secondary school principals and department heads work more competently with teachers, use meetings more effectively, and improve performance of long-range planning and evaluation functions. The last two publications discuss department head responsibilities in detail; both stress the value of shared decision making, cooperation, and the evolution of an effective work group or "esprit de corps." (MLH)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED290236

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Number 92, February 1988

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

The selections are intended to give educators easy access to the most significant and useful information available from ERIC. Because of space limitations, the items listed should be viewed as representative, rather than exhaustive, of literature meeting those criteria.

Materials were selected for inclusion from the ERIC catalogs *Resources in Education (RIE)* and *Current Index to Journals in Education (CIJE)*.

ERIC® Clearinghouse on Educational Management
College of Education, University of Oregon

Role of the Department Chairperson

EA 019 898

1 **Anderson, Carolyn J.** "Instructional Leadership Behaviors of High School Principals, Assistant Principals, and Department Chairpersons: A Comparison." *High School Journal* 70, 2 (December 1986/January 1987): 115-23.

Although the effective schools literature strongly supports principals' direct involvement in instructional matters, other recent studies suggest that principals actually emphasize managerial functions of the job. These principals perform best by providing *indirect* instructional support in terms of training, resource allocation, scheduling, and communication. Anderson's study, which examined "variations in functions performed by principals, assistant principals, and department chairpersons," supports the "instructional management" alternative and applies it to secondary schools.

Anderson interviewed certified personnel working at least .4 FTE in eight comprehensive high schools in a large Southwestern public school district. Although these schools shared some common characteristics, their administrative teams varied considerably in leadership philosophy and administrative organization. To measure amounts of instructional leadership demonstrated by principals, assistant principals, and department heads, Anderson used a revised version of Glatthorn and Newburg's Sources of Instructional Leadership (SOIL), which measures thirty-two leadership functions.

Results show clearly that teachers perceive all three administrative groups "as performing quite different instructional functions." Generally, the assistant principals were seen "as performing the largest role overall in instructional leadership functions" such as master scheduling, teacher assignment, and student discipline. The department head's most important tasks were seen as allocating personnel and materials and transmitting and interpreting school goals; other top-ranked functions involved "direct contact with teachers about instruction, both to organize teachers and to deliver direct services."

Anderson notes that "highest" in this study was relative; no position "was seen as performing more than a 'somewhat' important role on more than a few items." Results clearly support a shared approach to instructional leadership. Schools need to reexamine their "patterns of leadership delivery and include more of these functions in job descriptions and evaluation models." Administrators will strive to perform what they are expected to do.

2 **Free, Robert.** "A Method for the Selection of Department Chairmen." *NASSP Bulletin* 66, 455 (September 1982): 123-25. EJ 268 241.

"Teachers who believe they have no stake in the operational procedures of the school begin to feel that they have no stake in the school," says Free.

An Arizona high school principal, Free used the selection of a new English chairperson as an opportunity to involve faculty members in the school's decision-making process. (The former principal had appointed department heads to a lifetime tenure without using staff participation or considering their recommendations.) Free's article recounts and evaluates the new process.

The new principal informed faculty of the department vacancy and asked for their counsel in designing guidelines and a selection procedure. Several faculty volunteered to serve on a committee to "ensure the open and democratic selection of department chairmen." The principal and the advisory committee agreed on candidacy requirements, length of term, and composition of the selection committee. Then the committee met with the current department chair to discuss the role, duties, and responsibilities involved. The district personnel office helped the committee develop six specific questions to ask each candidate.

The committee then interviewed each candidate, with the principal observing but not actively participating. Candidates were ranked immediately after each interview without discussion. Scores were then totalled, and the committee made its recommendation. On the following day the principal met with each candidate, discussed his or her interview, and communicated the committee's decision. The retiring department head then announced the selection to department members.

The process succeeded on many levels. Staff participation was high, a "closed" position became open, and faculty leadership was encouraged. Also, since department members helped select the new chairperson, they have a stake in helping him succeed.

3 **Glatthorn, Allan A., and Norman A. Newberg.** "A Team Approach to Instructional Leadership." *Educational Leadership* 41, 5 (February 1984): 60-63. EJ 293 151.

A team approach works well for secondary schools, say Glatthorn and Newberg. Principals can delegate responsibility for in-

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

structional leadership functions to trusted subordinates, including department heads.

The authors cite as an example a reading/language arts chairperson whose talents were recognized by the principal. This department head proceeded to improve teaching quality throughout the whole school almost single-handedly by "conducting staff workshops, developing and sharing materials, and encouraging colleagues to believe in the abilities of low-income minority children."

Developing and implementing a team approach involves four key stages: diagnosis, allocation, implementation, and evaluation. Even more important is building cooperation among faculty. According to the authors, "with a team approach, the critical functions of curricular and instructional leadership are assigned to . . . staff most capable of performing them, rather than being centralized in the principal's office." After talents are mobilized, "a low-key system of professional accountability" ensures that all tasks are accomplished by someone.

4 **Hord, Shirley M., and Sheila C. Murphy**. "The High School Department Head: Powerful or Powerless in Guiding Change?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Chicago, April 4, 1985. 43 pages. ED 271 806.

Based on a three-year study, this report presents data about department head activities in thirty high schools across the nation. Hord and Murphy analyze background research on the subject, as well as the perceptions of teachers, administrators, and department heads themselves concerning the teacher-manager role.

Far from confirming any one prevailing assumption, this study found "consistent role inconsistency." Despite the general view that department heads occupy a "driver's seat" position in the school hierarchy, the authors identified few heads whose responsibilities justify this attitude—even in schools with principals who *thought* they had delegated sufficient authority. While some teachers saw their heads as associates and peers, others viewed the role as offering leadership possibilities.

The authors reached these conclusions after interviewing department heads and grouping their behaviors into six roles in order of increasing responsibility: communicator, coordinator-manager, emerging assister, teacher improver, program improver, and evaluating administrator. Various functions were matched with these roles and rated according to degree of power exercised. The more powerful the department heads' roles, the more likely they were to perform as change facilitators. More often, however, heads were *responders* to other change initiators in a school. For heads to have a leading role in change, say Hord and Murphy, they must be in charge of the department and have clearcut responsibility for teacher inservice and evaluation.

Department heads often lack clearly defined job descriptions and receive inadequate remuneration and inservice training—conditions that inhibit their performance and constrict their roles. Because they receive few benefits and little allocated time, most will be confined to communicator and coordinator functions.

5 **Kottkamp, Robert B., and John R. Mansfield**. "Role Conflict, Role Ambiguity, Powerlessness and Burnout among High School Supervisors." *Journal of Research and Development in Education* 18, 4 (1985): 29-38. EJ 321 747.

Helping professionals of many disciplines are susceptible to burnout. Kottkamp and Mansfield cite recent research demonstrating that "teachers' perceptions of role conflict and ambiguity are related to perceptions of burnout." One might expect department heads, as both administrators and teachers, to experience role conflict, role ambiguity, and feelings of powerlessness.

To test these relationships, the authors distributed questionnaires measuring these supposed burnout factors and other contextual variables to department heads in thirty-five schools in three New Jersey counties.

Results of the regression analyses are encouraging. As the authors note, the department heads studied actually appear to have experienced "slightly lower burnout rates than classroom teachers" and do not seem "paralyzed by their organizational roles despite feelings of role conflict and ambiguity."

The authors speculate that department heads experience less burnout because they spend fewer hours teaching in classrooms. Among the organizational factors that can help prevent department heads' burnout are clear lines of authority, clear job descriptions, realistic goals and objectives, conflict resolution training, and support groups. Principals can help reduce role ambiguity by instituting honest two-way communication. Reducing organizational causes of burnout is the key to success.

6 **Lucy, John R.** "Curriculum Revision: Who Will Provide the Leadership?" *NASSP Bulletin* 70, 6 (November 1986): 85-87.

Lucy agrees with the growing number of educators convinced that "realistically, principals can be involved only in a peripheral way in curriculum study." Acknowledging principals' lack of time and subject expertise, many districts mistakenly assign curriculum development to assistant superintendents of curriculum or other central office specialists.

According to Lucy, principals and central office staff should play only supportive roles in curriculum revision. Department heads are ideal curriculum leaders because of their position, their subject area expertise, and their daily classroom experience. Despite being the logical choice to lead curriculum revision, department heads may be spending far too little time on this task.

Lucy describes a study in which 130 secondary school department heads "were asked to estimate time spent on 10 tasks." On the average, the chairpersons spent only 17 percent of their time on curriculum development and related tasks. Teaching (29 percent) and administration (17 percent) headed the list. Nearly 30 percent of the department heads did not teach at all; another 60 percent "taught two or more classes, with some teaching as many as five."

"Teaching" and "developing curriculum" were found to have a significant negative correlation; the more time spent on teaching, the less time was available for curriculum development functions. To address this problem, principals should delegate the primary responsibility for curriculum development to department heads and limit their teaching load to one class, Lucy says. Moreover, department heads should attend appropriate conferences and participate in leadership and group dynamics training to become effective curriculum leaders.

7 **Marcial, Gerald E.** "Department Supervisors—Are They Line or Staff Administrators?" *NASSP Bulletin* 68, 472 (May 1984): 87-90. EJ 299 478.

The position of chairperson, says Marcial, is "the most taxing, the most challenging, and basically, the most important" of all administrative posts. Because department heads play numerous roles, confusion arises over the nature of their responsibilities and their proper niche in schools' organizational structure. In one survey of the attitudes of various administrators, teachers, and principals, high school department heads tended to see their role

as an administrative line position, whereas teachers viewed the role as a staff position lacking supervisory authority.

According to Marcial, the department head's main skill must be human relations. One researcher estimates that "75 percent of the chairperson's time is devoted to effective communication with fellow teachers, students, and administration."

Marcial rejects a purely supportive role for school department heads, and instead assigns equal import to their evaluative and supervisory functions. While principals are clearly responsible for summative evaluations, the well-trained department head is in a better position to assist the principal with formative evaluations comparing teacher performance with department and school objectives. Although chairpersons with evaluative responsibility may have problems developing trust within their departments, principals rely on these heads to encourage teachers' growth and to evaluate them as well.

In sum, Marcial has no difficulty defining department heads' role; to him, they are both line *and* staff administrators.

8 **Nelson, Marylin J.** "Peer Review in the English Classroom." *English Journal* 76, 1 (January 1987): 85-86. EJ 347 032.

Despite a district's best intentions, peer review can be greeted with as much apprehension and resistance as annual administrative evaluations. A junior high school department head, Nelson describes her department's efforts to refine the peer evaluation process to suit teachers' needs. The entire process was left up to the department. The principal agreed that she did not need to see the head's responses to teachers.

Before visiting classrooms, Nelson sent a message describing the peer review process to each English teacher. She also sent a copy of the department head job description mandating peer review and asked for help in clarifying the department's purpose and format. She also stressed peer review as a *response*, not an evaluation, and the confidentiality of the results. Nelson then visited classrooms with positive expectations and took random notes on teachers' techniques and processes. As she moved from classroom to classroom, she was able to pass on ideas from one teacher to another.

Nelson chose to respond to each teacher in a narrative. Her intention was to address teaching techniques and curriculum concerns and emphasize the positive. Each teacher read the narrative and discussed it and the process with Nelson. Teachers declared the process a success. They appreciated the narrative response format, the positive approach, and the chance to be "evaluated by a co-worker and a co-expert in their field."

To ensure the program's continued effectiveness and relieve pressures caused by other evaluations, the department decided to make it clear to teachers that the peer reviews would not be placed in their permanent files and would not affect their tenure or other personnel matters.

9 **Sange, Peggy**. "Leadership Training for Secondary Principals and Department Heads." *Educational Leadership* 40, 1 (October 1982): 55. EJ 269 904.

Sange describes the Instructional Leadership Project (ILP), a Maryland program to improve instruction and reduce student disruption "by meeting staff development needs of principals and department chairpersons in secondary schools."

A survey of Anne Arundel County principals, department heads, and teachers in August 1980 found that department heads (with principals' support) were not providing sufficient services for teacher staff development. Project staff developed a three-year program for administrators, guidance staff, and department heads. While the first year emphasized intensive, individualized inservice training in a variety of supervisory and instructional functions, the second and third years provided participants with opportunities to use newly learned skills to assist teachers with instructional improvement.

To accomplish its training goals, ILP uses various methods such as full-day workshops, school support meetings, individual conferences with department heads, individual planning sessions with principals, and principal seminars. Although ILP concentrates mainly on administrators and department heads, the program model is geared to translate "staff development in instructional leadership into direct services to classroom teachers."

The payoff for department heads is increased competency in working with teachers, providing professional improvement materials, using meetings more effectively, doing long-range planning, and performing evaluation functions. Educational benefits are likely to extend as the project grows to include all secondary schools in the county.

10 **Sergiovanni, Thomas J.** *Handbook for Effective Departmental Leadership: Concepts and Practices in Today's Secondary Schools*. 2nd ed. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1984. 506 pages.

Sergiovanni intends this second edition of his *Handbook* as a practical guide aimed at department heads and aspirants to this challenging position. Principals and other administrators who influence department head development can also use the book to evaluate "the chairpersonship and to redefine this role effectively," he says.

Each chapter in the first five parts is divided into two sections: one emphasizes basic concepts; the other, current practices. Sergiovanni sees the concepts/practices approach as particularly suitable for use in staff development and other inservice programs. Part I discusses new leadership for middle, junior, and high schools. The next four parts discuss organizational, supervisory, administrative, and educational leadership functions, depicting realistic work situations and offering creative approaches to dealing with them.

An example is chapter 4, which discusses "the department as an effective work group." Here readers are provided with tips to help size up their departments and offered eight typical department profiles, ranging from productive to combative. Characteristics of effective work groups are explained, along with the value of shared decision-making, cooperation and competition among departments, and workable strategies for solving problems. The practice part of the chapter offers tips on making meetings effective, building structured agendas, and influencing decision-making styles.

Sergiovanni's last three chapters concentrate on the more "shadowy" aspects of successful leadership, such as the roles of politics and power, the importance of personal health, and strategic requirements of quality leadership.

11 **Turner, Harold E.** "The Department Head—An Untapped Source of Instructional Leadership." *NASSP Bulletin* 67, 464 (September 1983): 25-28. EJ 286 628.

Principals who want some assistance with instructional leadership need to reconsider the department head's role, says Turner. A good first step is to prepare a department head job description that clearly specifies behaviors and functions without stifling creativity. Much can be learned from consulting management experts like Peter Drucker, who offers insights on time-management and determining priorities.

Turner finds several other competencies equally important. One is personnel relations. When properly trained, department heads should be capable of "direct, sustained interaction with teachers" and engendering an "esprit de corps." Another primary responsibility is helping teachers to improve their teaching, preferably by using a clinical approach that relies heavily on "colleague consultation."

The department head must also be able to develop and revise curricula, lead pilot or field tests of new curricula, and evaluate efforts needed and results achieved. The department head should monitor courses and programs to meet departmental and school goals and possess enough research expertise to identify promising innovations and help the department with self-assessment functions.

With few departmental models available, most administrators will have to fashion their own departmental emphasis. Turner recommends that local inservice training be supplemented by certain college courses specifically tailored for department chairpersons. The departmental approach to improving instructional leadership cannot succeed without solid administrative support and disruption of the usual hierarchical administrative structure.

ERIC
Clearinghouse on Educational Management
College of Education
University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403